

# AMERICA'S VISION

AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

LEWIS H. MACHEN

AT THE

COUNTY FAIR

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FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA

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OCTOBER 4, 1917



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## AMERICA'S VISION

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN :

I am grateful to Mr. Hall for the cordial terms in which he has introduced me. When the President of the Fairfax Fair Association, Mr. Thomas R. R. Keith, invited me to speak here today I could not forego the opportunity of greeting so many citizens of my native county, many of whom I have known so long and held so dear. But it is no easy task to add to the address to which you have just listened, in which there have been discussed with force and eloquence, some of the very questions I had assigned to myself.

As you are probably aware, the President of the United States has designated a Council of National Defense, of which my school friend, the Secretary of War, is chairman, with which are associated councils of defense in all the states, the chairman of the Virginia council being the distinguished Superintendent of the Virginia Military Institute, General Edward W. Nichols, another active and able member being your countyman, Hon. R. Walton Moore. This council has created a Speaker's Bureau and designated me as chairman, for the purpose of having addresses delivered from time to time throughout the State upon matters pertaining to the war and its incidents.

Among the objects of these activities is the constant refreshment of the minds of the people of the country as to the causes of the war, the course and manner of its progress, as well as to the means by which the people may best cooperate in this momentous national enterprise. This must be my excuse for going over ground with which most of you are familiar and emphasizing duties which some of you have already patriotically performed.

If our city had been set on fire by a band of incendiaries, even through years of labor, with huge losses of life and property, had been necessary to extinguish the flames, we would not have relaxed our efforts at any stage of the conflagration to identify the criminals and to fix the extent of their responsibility. So when the world has been kindled into war we should not cease, even as we strive to save our civilization from destruction, to search for the malefactors who applied the torch and to trace the various steps by which they have sought to execute their felonious designs.

A few short years ago America looked out upon a world, to all appearances, in profound peace. Disquieting rumors had indeed reached these shores of a European power which dreamed of dominating Europe, with a view perhaps to the ultimate domination of the world—an octopus, whose tentacles were being rapidly extended into Asia and Africa and were feeling their way surreptitiously, toward the American continent; a power which preached a gospel of war—of calculating, ruthless and freightful war—as a means of political and spiritual development; a power which had seen its rise by the exercise of the mailed fist and by a policy of blood and iron and which declared these methods legitimate and

praiseworthy; a power which systematically resisted the concensus of a preponderance of the civilized nations for the diminution of armaments, for the arbitration of international disputes and for the reign of universal peace among nations. Nevertheless, America hoped these things were but the vaporings of a braggart and bullying nation, young, vigorous and rash, which, with the advance of years and in the course of the evolution of the human spirit would cease its boasting prattle.

July, 1914, witnessed the awakening of the world from this dream of repose and safety. The assassination of a worthless prince by a still more worthless anarchist was made the pretext of certain demands of a large power upon a little country which could not, without suicide, have been entirely granted and which were recognized by the diplomats of Europe and America as being a deliberate scheme to force war upon the smaller country. Back of Austria-Hungary's demands upon Servia was clearly seen the ominous power of Germany, armed, accoutred, and provisioned—fully prepared for war—as no other nation had been at any time in the history of the world. The diplomats of the civilized nations outside of the Teutonic alliance had united in praying that Austria-Hungary would modify those demands within the bounds of international law, or would arbitrate her contentions before proceeding to hostilities. The German ambassador at Vienna, since deceased, openly encouraged the Austrian government to refuse to take any step that would encourage the friends of peace. Then the same diplomats united in the request of the German government that its influence be exerted upon Austria to find some peaceful mode of adjusting its grievance. No reply was made to that request, but Germany continued to exchange diplomatic notes with Austria, which have never been published and which the world is justified in believing would prove beyond a doubt that Austria, in deliberately breaking the peace of Europe, was acting under the coercion of her dominant ally.

Thus the world stood aghast at seeing the chariot of the modern Mars, aflame with all the fires of war, start in the direction of France—a country which had not been involved in the quarrel; against which no conceivable grievance could have existed upon the part of Germany, except that which a robber nation might feel against a nation she had robbed; a land just recovered from a war forced upon her by this same people, who had despoiled her of two of her most beautiful provinces, subjected her to a humiliating defeat and wrung from her a huge indemnity. Against this country, lying in the sunshine of peace and happiness—against this people, brilliant, liberty loving, and patriotic beyond the apparent limitations of mortal nature, was war, most cruel, most barbarous, most deliberate and unjustified, hurled by a fighting machine that accounted itself, and was by the world accounted, irresistible.

Worse still, this infamous attack was made through the little duchy of Luxemburg, whose neutrality Germany had guaranteed, and through the small country of Belgium, not one-tenth her size

and not one-twentieth her strength in military preparation, whose neutrality Germany had also bound herself in honor to respect, if honor ever could bind those who deliberately embarked upon an enterprise of murder and plunder.

Then it was that America beheld a sight which thrilled her heart, as the hearts of children are thrilled by the story of Horatius at the Tiberian Bridge, or of Leonidas at the pass of Thermopylæ. The German Chancellor had confessed to the members of the Reichstag that Belgium had been invaded in defiance of international law and in the execution of a great wrong. The German government had made a demand upon the Belgian king and government to submit to the passage of the German army, thereby securing to Belgium safety during the war and probably an advantageous alliance afterwards, while resistance on the other hand, inevitably meant being crushed beneath the iron heel of the invader. Twelve hours were given for reply. The king and council met in solemn concave in the darkness of night. There were no discussions, no hesitation, no counting of cost, but a prompt refusal of the humiliating demands. Had Belgium at that moment been ruled by cowards, civilization might have been set back a century; but Belgium had for a king a noble and courageous spirit, who even in these days of democratic advance has half redeemed the dying trade of kingship; who thought only of his country's honor and of her duty to the world in its most awful crisis.

Then began that heroic resistance with a handful of devoted men against a mammoth and ruthless horde who plundered, burned and massacred the helpless inhabitants, sparing neither women nor children, nor the aged nor the sick, causing the world to shudder at its inhumanity, at its calculated and official fiendishness, making the name of Germans a worse reproach than fifteen hundred years of execration have visited upon the memory of the Huns of Attila.

Schools, colleges, universities, cathedrals, towns, cities, hovels of the poor, palaces of the rich, all were fed to the flames; but ever the hearts of the Belgian people remained true, and for that the name of Belgium will live in history as a beacon light, which for a whole millennium will guide all people who wish to walk in the ways of imperishable honor.

The blond beast, with savage fury, hacked his murderous way through this innocent country. Liege, Louvaine, Brussels, yielded to such bombardment as had never fallen upon the earth before, and all the while the forces of France were gathering from the quiet villages and busy cities, the peaceful vine-clad hills and vales, ready and even anxious to give their lives to preserve their beautiful France—"La Belle France."

Not all the decisive battles of history, not Marathon nor Tours, nor Hastings, nor Agincourt, nor Yorktown, nor Waterloo, nor Gettysburg, nor all of them together, perhaps, can equal the battle of the Marne in value to civilization, when the barbarous Teutons were turned back from well nigh the gates of Paris, through the



dauntless valor of the French citizen soldier, by the matchless genius of the republican soldier, Joffre.

And so America saw the opposing hosts settle down upon the western front in two of the longest and strongest battle lines in history, wearing each other away by years of ceaseless attack and counter attack, by artillery beyond computation, by incalculable money expense, by mines extending miles under the earth, by airplanes hurling missiles from unimagined altitudes—a monotony of slaughter, of agony, of desperate courage, but a practical deadlock, broken only by the fierce but futile attack of the Teutons upon Verdun and by the marvelous British thrusts at the Somme.

Great Britain, at the outset sent her first gallant hundred thousand, most of them, alas! to perish, and gathered from her overseas empires of Canada, India, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, her thousands who have fought with emulating valor to conquer the arch enemy of the mother country.

America could not be unaware that Germany was running counter to the humane instincts of the world in being the first to use poisonous gasses and liquid fire; the first to drop missiles from aeroplanes and zeppelins upon hospitals and schoolhouses and to slaughter wholesale aged persons and infants. Surely, it is impossible to call these things brutal without insulting the brutes of the jungles, which do not kill through wanton love of bloodshed.

America saw with surprise, which gradually deepened into resentment, the virtual enslavement of the conquered peoples, the deportation of Poles, Belgians, and French into Germany by the thousands, and more especially the tearing from their homes and communities of women and young girls with possibilities at which all civilized men were shocked. Oh, Kultur, surely this was your crowning infamy! The slaughter of prisoners, the massacre of civilians, the dispatching of defenseless women, the firing upon the hospitals and ambulances of the Red Cross, the sinking of hospital ships under safe conduct from the German government, containing grain for the starving Belgians, the mutilation of little children—all of these charges and others no less criminal, substantiated by German evidence, will stand forever in the indictment against the Hohenzollerns; but this offense against womanhood can be punished adequately only by the trial, conviction and execution, according to the forms of law, of those guilty of this capital crime. How else may the world deal with fiends who stand charged with the systematic and official debauchery of their own women?

America was not blind to the fact that Germany's coalition with Turkey could scarcely fail to bring into the war features of extraordinary cruelty, yet few were prepared for the horrors of the Armenian massacres, carried out with fiendish thoroughness and stimulated by the hatred of Christianity, resulting in the slaughter of whole communities of young and the old, of the sick and the crippled, of women and little children, by the hundreds of thousands, and the deportation of young Christian girls into Turkish harems. German witnesses have described the almost unimagin-



able horrors of the practical destruction of millions of Armenian people. It may be true, or not, that these frightful acts were instigated and encouraged by German officers, with the approval of the German government; but none can deny that one word from the Emperor of Germany would have prevented the persecution, or would have stopped it at any hour of its progress. Therefore, at the royal feet of William Hohenzollern will be laid this crime without equal since Nero and Caligula bathed Rome in blood.

When America learned that the warfare was to be waged in part upon the sea she took it for granted that Germany's navy would be brought out to fight her enemies in open battle, or if submarines were used, they would be directed against ships of war in accordance with international law and the dictates of humanity; but when the frightfulness of the German government was extended from the land to the sea, when unarmed merchantmen and passenger vessels were sunk by German submarines indiscriminately and without warning, when innocent passengers, citizens of neutral countries, without regard to age or sex, were hurled into the surging ocean to almost certain death, America's amazement grew to indignation. When more than one thousand passengers, including over a hundred American citizens, some of whom were women and children, were sent to their watery graves from the decks of the stately *Lusitania*, which should have been as safe for them as their own homes, the indignation of America rose to hot and passionate anger that any government professing to be civilized should practice murder so ruthless and so infernal. A prompt apology and a disavowment at that time alone prevented hostilities between the two countries; but later America was dumbfounded at the news that the captain of the submarine that performed this dastardly deed had been decorated by the Kaiser, posing as the anointed agent of the Almighty.

Then followed the sinking of a dozen neutral ships carrying citizens of the United States, including the *Sussex*, with the loss of more than a score of American lives. Sternly was the German government called to account, and quickly was amendment made as far as possible, accompanied by assurance that the laws of war and of humanity, as interpreted by the Government of the United States, should be obeyed in the subsequent submarine campaign. Gradually America settled into a serene hope that no more offense would be given, but at the worst there would be nothing more serious than a strained neutrality.

Another chapter in this international tragedy was the unearthing of far-reaching conspiracies to dynamite munition plants in this country, and these were traced to the officials of the central powers who, through professing feelings of friendship and enjoying America's hospitality, were practicing deceit and treachery, betraying confidence, abusing privilege and plotting anarchy, all at the direction of the Imperial Government, which meanwhile, continued to prate of good faith, honor and divine guidance.

Most astounding, most unbelievable, and most Satanic of all was the plot of Zimmerman, under the direction of the German

government, to foment an attack upon the United States by the de facto Mexican Government, promising aid and comfort and money without measure and five American States as a reward to promote an invasion of the United States from the south in conjunction with Japan, all planned and urged at a time when the Teutonic diplomats in Washington were telling America that Germany and Austria were her friends.

Finally, as a virtual declaration of war came the announcement from the imperial throne that Germany would not keep her promise to cease murdering Americans upon the high seas, but would close the highways of the world which had been open since the days of piracy. Then it was that the patience of the most patient man in world broke down beneath a mountain of German perfidy and mendacity, and our President summoned in joint session the representatives of the people in Congress assembled, laid before them in words that will live while our language lives the hideous catalogue of crimes which Germany had committed, and advised the recognition of a state of war. Quickly came the response of Congress, echoing the determination of the people of America to throw in their fortunes with the great free peoples who were resisting this international outlaw, whose destruction alone could afford reasonable security to the peace of the world.

With a rapidity unequalled in history, a great, peaceable, liberty-loving nation called to her defense its young men of every race and class, whether rich or poor, whatever their color, creed or ancestry, into one vast democratic army to assist the allies, who by splendid devotion and heroic sacrifices had stemmed the torrent of Teutonic barbarism that threatened to overrun the world.

America goes with solemn joy to the rescue of little Belgium, so crushed, mangled, and desolate in body, so purified with the spirit of unquenchable honor; to the help of France, light-hearted and happy in peace, determined and courageous in war, striving to save herself from utter destruction; to the help of Italy full of romantic fires, drawn from her sunny skies and from the blue waters of the Mediterranean; to the help of Russia, gigantic and chaotic, dimly conscious of great possibilities, but in the throes of internal adjustment whose end no man can see; to the help of tiny Serbia, the innocent occasion of the great world convulsion, stricken by pestilence and troubled by barbarous hordes; to the help of Greece, the birthplace of democracy, with a history once glorious and later checked by failures, handicapped by the domination of stronger powers, now at last, with the support of the allies, throwing off her treacherous king and about to enjoy the freedom of which Byron sang; to the help of Britain, our old mother, that was once a tyrannical parent, from whose apron strings she felt compelled to break away, and of her dominions upon which the sun never sets, all administered in the interest of justice and peace, of growth in knowledge and political development.

America welcomes into the broad brotherhood of those who fight for freedom, Japan, China, Siam, and all other nations of the

Orient that may hear the call of world service; Cuba and all the Latin-American countries, which may resent the persecution of their kindred across the sea. America has appealed to the oppressed and the imperiled in all the earth, aye, even to the dumb, driven 'Teutons themselves, to make common cause against the bloated Prussian despots at Berlin.

To this league of honor, so rapidly enlarging, does America join her highest hopes and interests. All members have for their purpose the permanent overthrow of tyranny built upon the worship of force and in its place the enthronement of justice; the establishment of reason in the place of war; of honest dealing in the place of international scoundrelism; of knowledge in the place of suppression of truth; of the gospel of good will in the place of hymns of hate, and of the forces that work for the salvation of the race in the place of those which, if unrestrained, will lead inevitably to its destruction.

Not at small cost does America enter this war, with those making she has nothing to do, from whose issues she has nothing to gain, except freedom from the common peril. Billions of dollars have been poured and other billions will be poured into this consuming stream of world strife. Many thousands of our brave troops are now in France. Other thousands will follow soon. Two million Americans before many months will be under arms and ready to take their places with the tattered remnants of our European allies who, for three long years have presented their bodies to block the paths of the destroyer. How many of them will return safe and sound to us, who can say?

We must suffer great loss; pass through valleys of deep shadow; all of us must mourn; but it will be for the success of the noblest cause for which brave men and women in all the ages have grieved and fought and died.

For our enemies there must be but one result, unconditional surrender! When victory comes to the allies, America will hold her head erect among the nations, as she could not have done if she had refused to fight; her figure will stand out against the skies of time as the rescuer of all the ideals, hopes and ethical purposes according to which, and for whose promotion, she was born and has grown into her present commanding stature.

In this supreme crisis America expects every man, woman and child to do his duty. The stress of this conflict calls for the expenditure of every ounce of the nation's energy. There must be no slackers, military or civil. If one or two per cent of our population are to go abroad and give their whole time and risk limb and life, the other ninety-eight or ninety-nine per cent who stay at home must give a part of their time and thought, a part of their comfort and money, to make effective the courage and the sacrifice of our fighting forces and to sustain the government that directs their activities. Everyone must contribute, without stint and without complaint, freely out of his resources to make this republic the decisive force in the world struggle.

The money expense of this national enterprise will be forty or fifty million dollars a day, of which the normal national revenue will be but a tithe. Extraordinary taxation has been provided for, levied as equitably as possible. While flesh and blood is being conscripted no one should object to the conscription of wealth, of competence, or even of a part of the pittance of the poor. Individual economy to the point of self-denial must be universal. The greed that would seek to levy private extortion must be curbed with all the power of the national and state governments. The legitimate exactions of this time of economic crisis will be sufficiently trying.

The heavy financial demands upon the Federal treasury cannot be met by this present generation. Money must be borrowed from the accumulations and incomes of the people, upon bonds to be liquidated, for the most part by generations to come, who will also reap the fruits of the inestimable sacrifices of this time. One liberty loan has been successfully floated and another has been launched. There will be other bond issues—Victory bonds, Peace bonds, and other kinds. Every man, and woman whose resources are more than sufficient to supply food, clothing and shelter, should purchase one or more of these bonds, primarily for patriotic purposes, but also to promote individual thrift and the habit of investment, which may curb the American vice of extravagance. They are securities of the richest nation of the globe, bearing fair rates of interest, and will never be worth less than on the day of the issue. They will be legacies that any man might be proud to hand down to his children.

There must be no failure of any one of these issues. It would discourage the government, it would dishearten the people, it would disappoint our allies, above all it would arouse the glee and derision of our enemies, who have already pretended to mock America's military and financial strength.

For more than half a century it has been the policy of this government to entrust the care of the sick and the wounded among the sailors and soldiers to the ministration of the Red Cross Society, thus relieving the government of huge expense and of the multifarious details of medical and surgical administration. It gives the people an opportunity to assist directly in the humane endeavor to repair the cruel breakage of war; to fit again for the fighting line thousands who would be lost to the man power of the army and for doing the world's work after the war.

Who can value the alleviation of human suffering? Who that has ever experienced the merciful anodyne of medical or surgical relief, or has watched its blessings brought to assuage the agonies of a loved one, could balance such a boon in the scales with mere money? With what conscience may we withhold a dollar that can be spared, if it might save a life, or even an hour of suffering, to one of our country's brave defenders—perhaps of one bound to us by ties of friendship or of blood?

Other means there are for promoting the comfort of our



soldiers. The countless women who are sewing and knitting to make articles to protect the men from cold; those who are sending tobacco and other luxuries to the men at the front; all who are taking thought and pains for the benefit of our troops are making lighter the task of winning against a foe that omits nothing that works for efficiency in their fighters.

We must not forget that our soldiers have minds as well as bodies. They need literature for recreation and entertainment in the camps and at the front, and for solace in the hospitals and during their convalescence. They need scientific books and magazines to keep them abreast of the most advanced knowledge of gunnery, trench warfare, aviation, mechanics of all kinds, chemistry and a hundred other branches which this war of machines makes necessary for a soldier to know for purposes of attack and defense. Books on religion and philosophy, too, are in demand for men of serious minds who are engaged in a serious business, which they may not survive. Some books—chiefly fiction of the chaffy sort—are being donated, but most of the literature must be carefully selected by experts and bought. Buildings must be erected and trained librarians put in charge. A War Library Council, appointed by the Secretary of War, and a committee of the American Library Association have undertaken to raise a million dollars for this work, of which Virginia's share is twenty-five thousand dollars. There is service for all. Whoever makes an extra effort to increase or conserve the nation's food, or supply of any other necessary article, is contributing to the nation's final victory.

Above all, it must be remembered that our fighting men have souls, as well as bodies and minds, and should be provided with means of religious satisfaction and growth, according to their respective beliefs. All of the world's great religious bodies have organizations working for these ends and appealing for funds to assist the supreme business of supplying our soldiers with religious influences and moral safeguards against vice more deadly than the artillery of the enemy. Most of the men will come back to us after the war and it is to our interest that they should come morally strong and clean as well as physically sound. There is the duty also of maintaining a government and a society worth fighting for and which our victorious soldiers will be proud to own upon their return. We must guard against the social and moral deterioration at home, which every era of warfare induces, for we must be victors over ourselves, as well as over our enemies.

When the noise of battle shall have been silenced, when the nations shall have gathered to dictate terms of peace to an enemy once proud, but who shall then have been beaten, abased and made submissive, America will sit at the council table and see to the righting of the old wrongs and to the freeing of nations long held in political bondage. Might shall no longer make right in international affairs. Little nations shall have the privilege of choosing their own forms of government and of working out their own evolution toward freedom, without the compulsion of giant neighbors.

For three centuries America has been the refuge of the oppressed people of every clime, who have come in millions across the seas to taste of freedom under the stars and stripes. Now America herself will cross the seas, carrying freedom to be enjoyed by oppressed nations under their own flags.

America, we may believe, has a vision which poets and prophets have had of a "parliament of men, a confederation of the world", in which national grievances may be aired, and all questions incapable of diplomatic adjustment, not excluding those of safety, honor and vital interest, may be heard and decided by an international tribunal, whose judgment may be enforced by an international army and navy—even as a combination of free peoples of today is seeking to enforce the laws of humanity and justice against the central powers. Perhaps such a tribunal would make mistakes, perhaps such a force would be guilty of occasional wrong; but at their worst they could not work a fraction of the evil wrought by unrestrained nationalism. This war has done more damage than all the private crimes in history; than all the ruin attempted by red-eyed anarchists since the world begun. No evils which could come upon the earth through the possibly mistaken judgments of an international tribunal, or through the occasional unwise use of the forces at its command, could compare with the unspeakable agony, the boundless destruction, the incalculable wrongs which have resulted from the hideous doctrine that every nation has the right to assassinate another nation at will. No state of the American union has such a right, nor has any state of a single empire or federation on the globe, nor has any small nation. Why, then, should the large nations be permitted to exercise it? The people of the world ought not to sit again under the crushing weight of growing armaments and in the terrifying shadow of the threat of imminent war. The days of international terrorism, please God, are gone forever.

In America's heart is no despair, but high hope, strong courage, and a reliance upon the Source of all national spiritual strength. America's eye has scanned the pages of history and seen the progress of the world from century to century—with little halting, with few backward steps—from ignorance toward knowledge, from vice toward virtue, from superstition toward true religion, from mental and physical slavery toward freedom, and so learns faith for the future.

America's vision is at last a world chastened out of its indifference and folly, purified by suffering, strong in the maintenance of order and righteousness—a world not only safe for democracy, but safe for all that is pure and high and noble in the human race, a world worthy to be a footstool for the God of Justice and of Truth, of Freedom and of Peace.





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